

Journal of African Foreign Affairs (JoAFA)

ISSN 2056-5658 (Online) ISSN 2056-564X (Print)

Published consistently since 2014

Indexed by: IBSS, JSTOR, EBSCO, ERIH PLUS, ProQuest,
J-Gate and Sabinet

Volume 11, Number 3, December 2024

Pp143 - 162

The Limitations and Implications of Russia-South Africa Relations: An Afro-Decolonial Critique

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31920/2056-5658/2024/v11n3a6>

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Abstract

Russia's re-engagement with the African continent in the 21st Century has received much attention from academics, scholars, and media alike. Russia-South Africa relations have equally been the subject of scholarly debate and

criticism. A glance at the discourse of the two countries relations shows that scholars focused on their cooperation in multilateral institutions and forums, the deepening of their ties during Jacob Zuma's administration, which is purported to have brought a shift in South Africa's foreign policy; Russia's endeavor to use South Africa as a steppingstone to engage the African continent; Moscow's reluctance to support the reform of the United Nations Security Council; barriers of trade between the two countries and red tape that prevents South Africa from fully exploiting the economic opportunities in Russia. The literature also covers the trade patterns during Thabo Mbeki's tenure and the decline of Russia-South Africa relations within the administration of the sitting South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa. Taping on the lacunae left by previous studies, the current article provides an Afro-Decolonial critique of Russia's South Africa policy's limitations and implications for Pretoria's growth and development objectives. Methodologically, this is a desktop qualitative article that relied on secondary data and employed thematic content analysis.

Keywords: *Russia, South Africa, Policy, Limitations, Implications*

Introduction

The dominant literature on Russia-South Africa relations focuses on the two countries cooperation in multilateral institutions and forums, the deepening of their relationship during Zuma's administration, which is purported to have brought a shift in South Africa's foreign policy, Russia's endeavor to use South Africa as a steppingstone to engage the African continent, Moscow's reluctance to support the reform of the United Nations Security Council, barriers of trade between the two countries and red tape that inhibits South Africa to exploit economic opportunities in Russia. The literature also covers the trade patterns during Mbeki's tenure and the decline of Russia-South Africa relations within the administration of the sitting South African President, Ramaphosa. Prominent scholarly works that followed this pattern in their dissection of Russia-South Africa engagement include Neethling (2017), Cilliers (2017), Anthony, Tembe & Gull (2015), Asuelime (2018a), Asuelime (2018b), Maphaka (2020a), Volchkova & Ryabtseba (2013), Arkhangelskaya & Shubin (2013), Amusan (2018), Ndzendze (2021) and Nkuna & Shai (2020).

Neethling (2017) questions a shift in South Africa's foreign policy towards an ideological-driven and narrow policy that focused on BRICS

(Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), while some of the formation economies declined, namely Brazil, Russia, and China. Neethling regards the South African foreign policy as rooted in anti-West ideology and believes that BRICS could counter the dominance of the West, which is questionable and impractical. The study views BRICS as providing opportunities for South Africa, but not as a sole remedy for the country's ailing economy and the triple challenges such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment. A narrow BRICS-centred and anti-West foreign policy undercut investment from Western Europe and the United States of America. Alternatively, Neethling recommends that Pretoria adopt broader economic diplomacy and foreign policy globally. In agreement, Cilliers (2017) accounts that Zuma turned things upside down in South Africa's foreign policy by lobbying BRICS to support continental development instead of the Group of Seven (G7) lobbied by his predecessor, Thabo Mbeki. The deepening of relations with BRICS had far-reaching implications because the global reform advanced by IBSA (India, Brazil, and South Africa) formation of like-minded democracies was overlooked. South Africa's future foreign policy should be implemented in a manner that is responsive to her domestic development needs, such as economic growth, reduction of inequality, and creation of jobs. The said future policy should focus on deepening trade and investment with all significant trade partners beyond BRICS.

Anthony, Tembe & Gull (2015) take the debate further by indicating that Zuma's administration introduced a policy shift in the political arena, but economically, Western Europe, along with the United States of America, remained the major trading and investment partners to South Africa. *The Cons of South Africa's Membership in a China-led BRICS: An Appraisal* by Asuelime (2018a) evaluates the limitations of BRICS formation and their implications for South Africa. The study highlights that South Africa is unable to exploit economic opportunities because of a language barrier, such as Russian spoken in Russia. Asuelime (2018b) in *The Pros of South Africa's Membership of BRICS: A Re-appraisal* shows the potential benefits and gains for South Africa in the BRICS bloc. The study indicates that South African companies are unable to fully penetrate the Russian market because of the red tape in that country. Within this context, South Africa is ranked 41, and Russia stands at 92 of the countries open for business globally.

In Dislocation or Relocation? An Afro-centric analysis of South Africa's BRICS membership, Maphaka (2020a) analyses South Africa's membership to BRICS with a specific focus on China as South Africa's largest trading

partner to determine whether the bloc is mutually beneficial or other partners benefit at the expense of Pretoria. Building on the BRICS call for global reform and South Africa's trade with her partners in the bloc, Maphaka concludes that the formation is not mutually beneficial. While the bloc complements South Africa's efforts to relocate from the margins of international financial institutions, it is also used by China and Russia to trap Pretoria, India, and Brazil to the periphery of the United Nations Security Council. Volchkova & Ryabtseba (2013) investigate the features of Russia-South Africa relations within the context of BRICS and the Group of Twenty (G20). They argue that despite the two countries having long-lasting historical political relations, Russia's economic engagement with South Africa is very limited, and the former country focuses more on her cooperation with Pretoria in international relations rather than exploiting economic opportunities provided by BRICS.

Arkhangelskaya & Shubin (2013) examine the main features of the bilateral relations between Russia and South Africa in the context of the purported new scramble for Africa and the 2013 BRICS Summit held in South Africa. They echo the same sentiment of imbalance that exists between the political and economic arena in Russia-South Africa relations. Amusan (2018) dissects Russia's deepening relations with South Africa as a springboard to draw the support of the African continent to boost her ambition of reclaiming her global status. Amusan (2018) concludes that South Africa is not a suitable partner for Russia's objectives on the continent. Among other things, Pretoria is regarded as a sub-imperialist whose companies engage in exploitative practices throughout the continent. The developments, such as the fielding of Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, are seen by many on the continent as going against an undocumented agreement that a position of this nature should be assumed by candidates from small states. South Africa's support to the 2011 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1973, which paved the way for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization- led orchestrated regime change through ousting and assassination of the former and late President of Libya, Muammar Gaddafi, is viewed as undermining the African solidarity and unity.

Ndzendze (2021) evaluates the impact of gradual political interaction on trade between South Africa and Russia under Mbeki (the former President) and Putin (the sitting President) incumbency, 1999-2008.

Within this period, South Africa imported more products from Russia as opposed to her exports to Moscow, and access to each other's market enabled South Africa to accumulate \$25 million, which rose to \$2 billion during Zuma's presidency. Nkuna & Shai (2020a) account that Ramaphosa-led South Africa does not engage Russia to the same degree as the administration of his predecessor, Zuma. The decline of Russia-South Africa relations is mirrored by Ramaphosa's decision to replace the nuclear deal advanced by his predecessor with the Renewable Energy Independent Power Procurement Programme.

The foregoing studies show the lacunae in the discourse about the engagement of Russia and South Africa and mirror an epistemic injustice because only limited Afrocentric/Afro-Decolonial studies have been conducted on the two countries' relations. Thus, the existing discourse is predominated by Euro-American theories. This is so because, in the existing discourse, only Maphaka (2020a) and Nkuna & Shai (2020) have dissected Russia-South Africa relations from an African perspective. Given this scholarly gap, the current article deployed the underutilised Afro-Decolonial lens to critique the limitations of the Russia-South Africa policy and its implications for Pretoria's growth and development objectives. To achieve this, the article analyses Russia's political and economic interests in South Africa, which serve as Moscow's major objective in its engagement with Pretoria. The first part of the article expounds on the Afro-Decolonial lens adopted by the study. The second section provides a methodology adopted by the study. The subsequent section provides a critique of the Russia-South Africa policy, its limitations, and its implications for South Africa's growth and development objectives. The last part of the article provides a conclusion and recommendations.

Theoretical and Methodological Interpretations

The article is underpinned by the Afro-Decolonial lens articulated better by Zondi (2019). The latter refers to theoretical principles that emanate from Decoloniality and Afrocentricity. The Afro-Decolonial lens analyses African phenomena or communities from their position to dismantle perpetual epistemic injustice and dislocation advanced by Euro-American theories. With this, the underutilised Afro-Decolonial lens is drawn to shift the locus of reasoning in the discourse of Russia-South Africa relations, which is predominated by Euro-American theories. The lens is used to study the relationship between Russia and

South Africa from the voices of Africans who have been largely silenced by the dominance of their Euro-American counterparts. Thus, the article forms part of the epistemic rejection of fragmentary analysis provided by Euro-American mainstream theories imposed on Africa and her people, notably Realism and Marxism. The authors are thus positioned epistemically; their thinking, reasoning, and understanding of Russia-South Africa relations are based on African history, experience, values, interests, problems, and needs. The marginalised decolonial thinkers employ the lens to dismantle the ontological crisis brought by Euro-American coloniality and reposition African ontological claims to their epistemic locus (Shai 2016; Rapanyane and Sethole 2021).

Additionally, the Afro-Decolonial lens is used to unmask other aspects of African dislocation in the socio-economic realm and advance remedies to attain the relocation of Africa and her people from the periphery to the center of the globe. In this regard, the article is part of the decolonial discourse that challenges epistemic injustice by rejecting the Eurocentric claim of universality, neutrality, and single truth. The latter should be understood in the context that arguments are influenced by the position of individuals to a certain class, sexuality, gender, spirituality, linguistic, geographical location, and race on the globe (Zondi 2019; Shai 2016; Rapanyane and Sethole 2021; Grosfoguel 2010). Thus, the article does not hide or separate researchers from the analysis, like the Euro-American perspective.

A qualitative approach was adopted for this desktop article that relied heavily on secondary data. Building on this qualitative research approach, the authors sampled up to 35 documents that were all analysed using thematic content analysis, as explained better by Maphaka, Rapanyane & Maphoto (2020) and Anderson (2017). All relevant documents sampled were derived specifically from official policy documents and or briefs, books, academic thesis/dissertation, and journal articles. The composition of the African values, interests, needs, history, and contemporary experiences have played a critical role in informing the findings and recommendations of this article (Schreiber 2000; Mazama 2001; Asante 2007; Ntseane 2011; Reviere 2001; Mkabela 2005; Shai 2016). The most important ingredients of a research article of credibility, dependability, and confirmability were ensured through data triangulation.

Limitations and Implications of Russia-South Africa Policy

Since her readmission to the international community in 1994, South Africa is striving to disentangle itself from being a colonial subject that serves the political and economic interests of its powerful partners in a world that has shifted from what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2014) calls global colonialism to global coloniality. The latter refers “to the contemporary power patterns that are largely premised on coloniality wherein Western nations occupy an apex position while countries of the South, including South Africa, are consigned on the margins of the globe” (Maphaka 2020b: 102). In other words, coloniality refers to the continuation of colonial socio-economic, political, and cultural patterns (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2014). Among other things, as part of the marginalised Global South, South Africa is representing her interests and those of other developing countries in multilateral institutions and forums to enhance the voice and status of the Global South. Included here is South Africa’s strive to disentangle itself from being a net recipient of norms, rules, and policies crafted for Africans without Africans in an uneven global system led by Euro-American developed countries by calling for global reform. At the bilateral level, South Africa regards the development of infrastructure, diversification, and industrialisation of the economy as a strategic avenue to relocate itself from the margins of the global coloniality dominated by developed Euro-American countries. Because of the above, the subsequent section analyses the limitations of the Russia-South Africa policy and their implications for South Africa’s growth and development objectives, specifically focusing on Russia’s political and economic interests in South Africa.

Russia’s Political Interests in South Africa

Russia seeks to establish and support multipolarity that would enable her to attain domestic development objectives as well as containing policies that might stop her growth and strategies. For most of history, since the demise of the Cold War, Russia has remained the proponent of a multipolar world system and anti-United States hegemony. It is within this context that Russia forms diverse partnerships with developing countries to boost its diplomatic clout against the West, and this pattern has since received greater significance after the sanctions imposed by the United States and European Union in response to Moscow’s annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. In this regard, Russia’s deepening re-engagement with the African continent, particularly the Sub-Saharan

region, forms part of its geopolitical and economic strategy (Sidiropoulos & Alden 2019; Volchkova & Ryabtseba 2013).

South Africa occupies a strategic role in Russia's re-engagement with Sub-Saharan Africa due to Pretoria's role in the region and the globe, particularly her participation in many multilateral forums and institutions (Sidiropoulos & Alden 2019). For example, South Africa is the only African country represented in the BRICS and G20. Thus, Russia regards Pretoria as a strategic partner in advancing global economic governance reform. The significance attached by Russia to the BRICS bloc means that South Africa is a suitable partner in advancing the multipolar world order and boosts Russia's diplomatic clout in multilateral institutions such as the G20, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization (Volchkova & Ryabtseba 2013).

These developments are among other reasons that spurred Russia to support South Africa's integration into the BRICS, a forum that is pushing for the reform of asymmetry in global economic and governance institutions (Omaduore 2015). Among its objectives, BRICS formation calls for the reform of the world trade, economic, and political systems. This is done to push for the reform of the global system into a more equitable and multipolar world order. Specifically, the BRICS formation is calling for the reform of international financial institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in particular) to enhance the voice and representation of developing and emerging countries. Their call is spurred by the fact that the contemporary world order is dated, hence not representing the present political and economic developments (Moore 2012; Chiyemura 2014; Qobo & Soko 2015).

To deepen and accelerate their call for global reform, BRICS states established the New Development Bank in 2015 (Chiyemura 2014; Qobo & Soko 2015). Within this context, Asuelime (2018b) avers that BRICS formation serves as a multilateral platform that boosts and deepens South Africa's voice in her call for global reform, unlike when the country makes a unitary call. Adding to the foregoing arguments, Maphaka (2020a) states that the BRICS call for global reform is in line with South Africa's Afrocentric foreign policy, which advanced the improvement of African representation into a reformed multipolar system that is more equitable. He went on to state that the BRICS formation lobbies for a shift from global coloniality mirrored by Western domination and exploitation of the world's economic and governance institutions.

In other words, South Africa forms part of the African bloc used by Russia to advance its interests in the international community and multilateral institutions. In a strive to regain her erstwhile prestige on the globe, Russia is reaching out to the Global South to garner political, economic, and diplomatic support (Amusan 2018). Following his ascendancy, Vladimir Putin adopted a foreign policy that seeks to restore Russia's position on the globe, and the African continent became a targeted region to realise this objective (Olivier & Suchkov 2015; Matusevich 2019; Clifford 2021). Beyond that, African countries are strategic partners to counter any political and economic threat posed by the West on Russia at the bilateral and multilateral level. For example, Russia's invasion and ultimate annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 was followed by economic sanctions from Western nations (Matusevich 2019). In agreement, Omaduore (2015) outrightly points out that Russia seeks the support of African countries in multilateral institutions such as the United Nations. It relies on diplomatic support from the African continent to boost its quest for a multipolar world order and thwart any threat posed by developed Euro-American countries in multilateral institutions and forums. Moscow has, in this regard, benefitted from the African support to frustrate the Western-sponsored Resolution over her invasion and annexation of Crimea from Ukraine (Stronski 2019).

While the BRICS call for global reform carries water in the context of international financial institutions, extending such a call to the United Nations Security Council remains rhetoric. In agreement, Chiyemura (2014) indicates that India, Brazil, and South Africa use the BRICS bloc to advance the reform of global governance and their integration into the United Nations Security Council, while Russia and China are not prepared to lend them support. In the same line of arguments, Cilliers (2017) and Qobo & Dube (2015) are of the view that BRICS is downplaying the IBSA formation used by the said non-permanent member states to push for the reform of the United Nations Security Council. Maphaka (2020a) concludes that the BRICS formation has elements of dependency, underdevelopment, and domination found in South Africa's relations with Euro-American developed countries.

Arguing on the same issue, Weiss and Rumer (2019) argue that Russia seeks to deepen close cooperation with South Africa and two other African countries, assuming a non-permanent seat on a rotational basis in the United Nations Security Council. On issues related to the Council reform, Russia's apparent call for elevating the voice of BRICS

non-permanent members and other developing countries is rhetoric. A clear illustration is the reluctance of Russian diplomats to talk about the Council reform and its expansion.

South Africa has outrightly pointed out that a transformed world order would facilitate the attainment of its growth and development objectives (Maloka 2019). However, Russia-South Africa's political engagement is largely shaped by Moscow's position as a competitor and a beneficiary of global coloniality. The foregoing developments manifest that South Africa acts like a colonial subject that responds more to the interests of Russia at home and abroad, while Pretoria's interests receive scant attention. In other words, South Africa's foreign policy is subsumed to that of Russia. Thus, Pretoria responds more to the political interests of Russia. South Africa's presence as the only African representation in multilateral institutions such as BRICS enables Russia to extend and deepen African support in her diplomatic tussle against the West in the international community and various multilateral institutions. A clear illustration is South Africa's abstention to a Western-sponsored United Nations Resolution meant to impose sanctions against Russia for her invasion and annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.

While the BRICS-Plus was first implemented by South Africa during the 2013 BRICS Summit, the occasional inclusion of African countries along with the New Development Bank funding to the continent's infrastructure and sustainable development projects enabled Russia to cultivate even closer relations and deepen her support from the African bloc in the international community and organisations. Moreover, the non-western-centric policies advanced by the BRICS New Development Bank and Contingent Reserve Arrangement provide a conducive environment for Russia to compete for policy space with the West in the Global South, including the African continent. With the no-strings-attached policies gaining acceptance from the African continent, Russia stands a chance to promote its development policies in its quest to reclaim erstwhile global status. Anthony *et al.* (2015) argue that BRICS no-string-attached policies offer an alternative to Western loans and development aid, which have been used as a tool of interference to advance Western neoliberal policies in Africa and other regions of the Global South. With this, it is safe to argue that Russia-South Africa relations in the context of BRICS are an extension of Kremlin policy that uses the African continent as a stepping stone to achieve its global ambitions.

These developments imply that South Africa and the African continent in its entirety remain what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2014) calls the net recipient of norms, rules, and policies crafted for them without them. On the other hand, Russia, as a beneficiary of global coloniality through her permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council, is reluctant to support calls for its reform. Thus, Russia's selective call for the reform of international financial institutions perpetuates global coloniality that positions South Africa and the African continent at large on the margins of an asymmetrical globe dominated by developed Euro-American countries at the peak. Russia's perpetuation of the undecolonized Council sustains the Western control, domination, and exploitation of the African continent. This should be understood in the context that many of the Council resolutions are carried out on the African continent, and lack of African representation in that organisation means that the continent remains trapped to the margins of its experience and destiny. In other words, China, Russia, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America hold supreme authority on African matters, while the African Union member states such as South Africa are marginalised in their affairs. In this context, the South African view that a reformed world order would facilitate her growth and development objectives is frustrated by colonial power patterns perpetuated by Russia.

Russia's Economic Interests in South Africa

Russia-South Africa economic engagement forms part of Moscow's strategy towards Sub-Saharan Africa. Russia's 2000 Foreign Policy Concept regards economic interests as significant in Moscow's relations with Sub-Saharan African countries (Omaduore 2015). This should be understood in the context that Russia-Africa policy varies per the priority occupied by each region on the continent. North Africa, which has maintained close relations with Russia for the most part of the post-Cold War era, forms part of the Kremlin's broader strategy in the Middle East because of its proximity to the Mediterranean Sea. On the other hand, the Horn of Africa provides a basis for Russia to have clout in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Persian Gulf. In the Sub-Saharan region of Africa, Russia's engagement with countries in this part of the continent is driven by her quest for economic interests and diplomatic support in multilateral institutions (Stronski 2019).

Russia-South Africa economic relations have since deepened after the signing of the memorandum of understanding on the cooperation of the Platinum Group Metals in 2013. South Africa's large mineral reserves are of strategic importance to Russia's economic diplomacy. Additionally, South Africa's geographic location, along with its large ports and access to all seas, makes it a suitable partner that provides multiple opportunities for cooperation in areas such as economy and military. As such, the Russian investment is largely directed to the extractive sector administered by companies such as Renova Group, Norilsk Nickel, Evraz Group, and OAO Severstal. Renova Group is involved in the mining of manganese and alloys, Norilsk Nickel produces nickel and other related metals, while Evraz Group is involved in the production of alloys, steel, and vanadium. South Africa has the largest reserves of minerals such as chromium (70%) and platinum (87%) (Volchkova & Ryabtseba 2013). Inferring from the foregoing developments, Nkuna & Shai (2020b) postulate that South Africa is a suitable partner to cooperate with Russia in the mineral resource sector, thus boosting her economy and weathering economic sanctions imposed by European Union countries and the United States of America.

For several reasons, Russia is looking for minerals in Africa. Most of the Soviet reserves are under the sovereignty of former Soviet Union states, and it is often difficult for Russia to access them. As such, Russia is importing minerals such as manganese, chrome, and bauxite, while its reserves of copper, nickel, tin, and zinc are on the verge of depletion. On the other hand, South Africa has the largest reserves of chromium and manganese (Omaduore 2015). The cost associated with the exploitation of minerals in countries such as Serbia has made Russia to choose South Africa as an alternative source of minerals (Amusan 2018).

Renova, a Russian company, invested \$350 million in the joint United Manganese Kalahari Project to develop and modernise a manganese mine. Norilsk Nickel entered a joint venture with African Rainbow Minerals of South Africa to operate at the Tati Nickel Mining Company in Botswana and the Nkomati Joint Venture. By 2013, the foregoing company had invested \$100 million to reconstruct the copper and nickel factory. Evraz Group has stakes in South African companies that supply vanadium and produce metals (Arkhangelskaya & Shubin 2013; Omaduore 2015).

The Russian exports to South Africa in 2011 were chemicals (32%), timber, pulp, and paper (24%), food and agriculture (21%), metals (11%),

and machinery and transport equipment (10%). On the other hand, Russian imports from South Africa were composed of food and agricultural products (47%), mineral products (19%), machinery and transport equipment (19%), metals (7%), and chemicals (6%) (Volchkova & Ryabtseba 2013). Russia's trade with South Africa stood at \$138.1 million in 2002 and was around \$1 billion in 2012 (Asuelime 2018b). South African imports from Russia stood at \$278.7 million in 2012. The said imports were composed of oil products, chemical industry products, transport, machinery, wood, food, and agricultural products. Russian imports from South Africa amounted to \$685.6 million in 2012, comprising metals, aluminium, wood, and fertilisers (Arkhangelskaya & Shubin 2013).

Trade between South Africa and Russia accounted for R7.5 billion in 2013 (Omaduore 2015). South African imports from Russia accounted for \$270 million between 2013 and 2015. Those imports were comprised of mineral products, agro-products, chemical engineering, machinery, and industrial products (Nkuna & Shai 2020b). The South African investment in Russia stood at \$7115 million in 2016 (Amusan 2018; Olivier & Suchkov 2015). The recurring problem is that trade between the two countries is skewed in raw materials, thus not complementary. In agreement, Amusan (2018) argues that Russia focuses much on the South African extractive sector rather than establishing manufacturing companies that would produce value-added products and create more employment opportunities.

Just like South Africa, Russia exports commodity products such as crude oil, natural gas, fertilisers, iron and steel, crude nickel, and crude aluminium. A large part of Russian imports from Africa between 2009 and 2018 came from South Africa. However, such products were largely constituted by agricultural products such as fruits, nuts, vegetables, and wine (Sidiropoulos & Alden 2019). The two countries are importing finished products from developed Euro-American countries, ranging from machinery and mechanical devices to automobiles and spare parts. They are also vying for the global market of commodity products, except for the energy sector, which is dominated by Russia. By 2018, only three South African manufacturing and service companies were operating effectively in Russia: SABMiller, Nasper, and Mondi (Amusan 2018).

Russia-South Africa policy should be assessed and judged per South Africa's growth and development objectives articulated in the National Development Plan and Industrial Policy Action Plan cited by Asuelime (2018b). The said policies identified the development of infrastructure,

diversification, and industrialisation of the economy as prerequisites for South Africa's growth and development objectives. Because of the above developments, the authors argue that Russia-South Africa policy traps South Africa to the margins of asymmetrical global coloniality dominated by developed Euro-American countries at the peak. It is largely serving the Kremlin global ambition of finding alternative partners to boost and sustain Russia's economy, and thus increase her chances of reclaiming the erstwhile prestige. Significantly, the commodity-driven trade pattern is largely serving Russia's objective of finding alternative trade partners to frustrate the Western economic sanctions. In this context, South Africa acts like a colonial subject that responds more to the interests of Russia at home and abroad, while Pretoria's interests receive scant attention.

Beyond trade, Russia seeks to invest in South Africa's infrastructure development projects. In this context, South Africa signed an agreement with Russia to construct a nuclear project to supply electricity. The Rosatom-led nuclear deal was frustrated by the South African media, civil society, and opposition parties, which decried its costs and lack of transparency. On its side, the Russian government believed that the deal was frustrated by Western interference and local media, which demonised it as corrupt (Ndzendze 2021).

Arguing on the side of proponents, Nkuna & Shai (2020a) aver that the nuclear deal would have cost around \$500 billion and last the country for 50 years, while the costs of Renewable Energy Independent Power Procurement Programme advanced by Ramaphosa stood at \$ 1 trillion and must be renewed constantly. The criticism levelled against the nuclear deal formed part of the Western strategy to counter Zuma's reversal of the previous tender undertaken by his predecessor, Thabo Mbeki. During his tenure, the latter President placed power stations under a tender led by United States Company Westinghouse and French Company Areva. As such, Zuma's prioritisation of Russia's Rosatom sparked opposition from the pro-West opposition parties, lobby groups, and non-governmental organisations. Had it been implemented, the said deal would have been fair as it was going to be funded by BRICS New Development Bank as opposed to the renewable energy that is funded by already indebted South African taxpayers.

Leaning on the detractors, Weiss & Rumer (2019) account that the deepening of relations under Zuma's administration was largely informed by Russia's eagerness to take South Africa away from Western influence and form a partnership that will be used to reach out to other countries

across the continent. The relationship was, however, undermined by an untransparent and corrupt nuclear power plant construction deal, which sparked a heated debate in the National Assembly, pushback campaigns, and legal challenges from civil society groups and independent media.

Emerging from the above arguments, the nuclear deal would have helped South Africa to meet its energy development objectives provided it is implemented with altruism. However, the secrecy surrounding the agreement is alarming in a country that advances the democratisation of domestic and foreign policymaking processes. The secrecy surrounding agreements of this nature is restoring the colonial-apartheid state-centric approach to foreign policy, wherein matters of foreign affairs were the domain of central government while sub-state and non-state actors were excluded. Thus, the lack of transparency and openness in the Russia-South Africa nuclear deal project manifests that South Africa overlooks her commitment to democratising foreign policy by including sub-state and non-state actors. With this, Russia-South Africa policy promotes the perpetual dislocation of ordinary South Africans on issues of foreign affairs. Specifically, the failure of non-state actors, such as the media, to access the terms and conditions of the agreement deprived them of an opportunity to disseminate such information to the public. Maphaka (2020c) argues that the participation of non-state actors, such as the media and individuals in foreign policy, is lauded by the post-apartheid government as being in line with South Africa's democratisation process. Against this backdrop, it is safe to argue that Russia-South Africa's development policy is vulnerable to ulterior motives that could promote the development of the few elites and their inner circle while reducing taxpayers to objects of their development. Additionally, the said policy focuses narrowly on using South Africa as a springboard for Russia to become the biggest supplier of nuclear energy in the Sub-Saharan region of Africa.

Conclusion

This article added to the academic discourse on Russia-South Africa relations by providing the limitations of Russia-South Africa policy and its implications for Pretoria's growth and development objectives. By so doing, the article argued that the Russia-South Africa policy is not in keeping with the growth and development objectives of the latter country. Instead, South Africa acts like a colonial subject that serves the interests of Russia at home and abroad. Put simply, South Africa serves

as a foundation of Russia's foreign policy and is used by Moscow to advance her narrow, selfish interests at home, in the international arena, and multilateral institutions. In this regard, South Africa's foreign policy is subsumed under Russia's foreign policy as a beneficiary and a competitor in global coloniality. In the political realm, South Africa's BRICS membership extends and deepens support for Russia in her diplomatic tussle with the West in the international arena and multilateral institutions. The no-strings-attached policy advanced by BRICS provides an enabling environment for Russia to compete for policy space with the West, and Russia stands a chance to promote its development policies in its quest to reclaim erstwhile global status. Russia's selective call for the reform of the international financial institutions and reluctance to materialise the same call when coming to the United Nations Security Council is not in keeping with Pretoria's development prosperity that is tied to a reformed world order. In the economic spectrum, Russia-South Africa policy largely responds to Moscow's quest for alternative trade partners to frustrate Western sanctions and boots her ambition to reach its erstwhile status. The lack of transparency in Russian development infrastructure turned South Africa into a colonial state that responded to the interests of its partner and few political elites acting as enablers while ordinary citizens languished in poverty. Russian projects to South Africa are also used as instruments of broader Russian foreign policy to engage the Sub-Saharan Region of Africa.

Recommendations

To disentangle itself, South Africa should urge Russia to remove the red tape that inhibits its manufacturing companies from exploiting economic opportunities in Moscow. South Africa should lobby for a diversified form of Russian investment and enter joint ventures with multinational companies from the latter country to draw the technology and skills needed for its economic growth and development. South African democratic values of good governance and transparency should be promoted in future agreements with Moscow. South Africa should join efforts with other African Union member states to draft an Afrocentric policy through which they will engage BRIC(S) on their terms. This will facilitate the attraction of trade and investment as well as development aid that is responsive to African problems, needs, and interests. On the issues of global reform, such policy should make a reform of the United

Nations Security Council a priority and binding in their engagements with BRICS. This move will curtail contradictory postures undertaken by Russia and China on the Council reform.

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